"Péron's account [WEL: 1803] now follows. In looking in the direction from which cries had proceeded, 'we perceived two savages, who ran along the shore, both making great gestunes of surprise and admiration.... We answered by some cries, and tried to approach the bank; but instead of waiting for us, they dived into the forest and disappeared. In continuing our journey, we arrived at a small creek, at the end of which there was a pretty valley. We had hardly set foot ashore before two aborigines showed themselves at the top of a hillock. At the signs of friendship we made them, one of them threw himself, rather than descended from the rock. His physiognomy had nothing wild or harsh about it, his air expressed at once goodwill and surprise. That which seemed to strike him was the whiteness of our skin: wishing, no doubt, to assure himself that this colour was the same on the [39] whole of the body, he opened successively our waistcoats and shirts; and his astonishment manifested itself by great cries of surprise, and, above all, by extremely rapid stampings of the foot. Our long boat, however, appeared to occupy him even more than our persons; and after having examined us for some moments, he jumped into this vessel. There, without in the least troubling himself about the presence of the sailors, he appeared as if absorbed in his new examination; the thickness of the ribs and timbers, the solidity of its construction, its rudder, its oars, its masts, its sails; he observed everything with that silence and deep attention which are the least doubtful signs of interest and profound admiration. Just then, one of the oarsmen wishing, doubtless, to add to his surprise, gave him a glass bottle full of arrack, which

formed part of the rations of the crew. The lustre of the glass made the savage utter a cry of astonishment, he took the bottle and examined it for a few moments; but his curiosity was soon brought back to the boat, he threw the bottle into the sea, and then returned to his former examination. Neither the cries of the sailor for the loss of his bottle of arrack, nor the haste of one of his comrades to jump into the water to save it, appeared to affect him. He attempted several times to push out the long boat; but the cable which held it fast rendering his efforts useless, he was forced to abandon them, and to return to us, after having given us the most striking example we had ever seen of attention and reflection among savage peoples. Arrived at the top of the hillock, we found the second aborigine; he was an old man, about fifty years of age; his physiognomy, like that of the young man, was open and frank; and despite some undoubted signs of agitation and fear, one could easily distinguish candour and good nature. This old man, having examined us both with as much surprise and satisfaction as the first one, and having verified, as he did, the colour of our chests by opening our waistcoats and shirts, he made a sign to two women, who held off, to approach; they hesitated for a few moments, after which the elder one came to us, followed by the younger more timid and troubled one. The former appeared, like the old man, good and well disposed. The young woman had an interesting physiognomy. Her eyes had expression and something spirituel [in them] which surprised

us, and which we have never found since in any other woman of her nation; ... she appeared, moreover, to dearly love her child [a girl], [40] and her care for it had that affectionate and sweet character which is the particular attribute of maternal tenderness. At this juncture the young woman had a surprise. One of our sailors had a pair of fur gloves which he took off and put in his pocket on nearing the fire. On seeing this the young woman uttered so loud a cry that at first we were alarmed; but we were not slow to understand the cause of this species of fright, and by her expressions and gestures we could not doubt but that she had taken the gloves for real hands, or for a species of live skin, which could be taken off, put in one's pocket, and put on again as one pleased' (ch. xii. pp. 220-224)."

"Still later Péron's party met, on the south side of Oyster Bay, fourteen aborigines collected round the fire, [who] received it with transports, expressive at once of surprise, admiration, and pleasure. "'Medi-medi" (sit down, sit down) were the first words they spoke to us. We sat down: they grouped themselves around us. The arms laid aside, we regarded each other for some moments. We were so novel each to the other! The aborigines wished to examine our calves and our chests; we allowed them to do this as much as they desired, and cries, often repeated, were the expression of the surprise which the whiteness of the skin seemed to excite in them. They soon wished to carry their examination further still: perhaps doubting whether we were constituted like them, or wishing to assure themselves with regard to our sex; perceiving, however, our extreme repugnance to such an examination, they only insisted with regard to one of our sailors, who, on account of his youth, seemed better able to verify their conjectures or to dissipate their doubts. At my request, this young man decided to give them this satisfaction, and the savages appeared quite satisfied; but hardly had they [45] recognized that we were constituted like themselves, than they began to shout so loudly together for astonishment and joy, that we were stunned."

I: Roth--69
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(No date) 1890

Tasmanians

"It is not clear that by the devil they mean anything more than a spirit; but they say he lives in their breasts, on which account they shrink from having the breast touched."